

Media Release

Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

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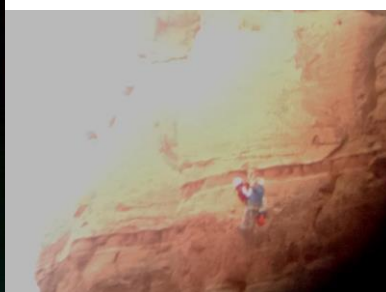


September 14, 2015

YCSO Rescue Volunteers continue to Risk their lives to Save Others

YCSO cannot thank enough the search and rescue volunteers who continually provide live saving solutions to anyone who has needed help in the many wilderness rescues over the last few weeks. It is hoped the ongoing publicity regarding incidents like these will cause those intending on venturing into the wilderness to PLAN, PREPARE, and avoid exceeding your abilities/experience. Below are just 2 examples from many recent rescues.

BELL ROCK RESCUE -



Photos above – L to R - rescue personnel (red arrow) are lowered near subject (under the white arrow), subject lifted from cliff face, subject arrives safely at command post.

On September 9, around 11 AM, YCSO dispatchers received a call regarding a man stuck on the north face of Bell Rock in Sedona, Arizona. Apparently the man had called a family member and told them he could not find a safe way off a ledge. YCSO Forest Patrol deputies arrived to assess the situation and requested assistance from the Yavapai County Search and Rescue Team, Backcountry Unit, along with a DPS Ranger helicopter crew, intending to conduct a short haul, or rope rescue, operation. The man was later identified as 34-year-old Craig Slaunwhite from Canada.

Just after 1 PM, the DPS Ranger helicopter arrived and determined they would need to rappel 2 members of the Backcountry team onto a ledge above Craig and after finding an anchor point, one of the rescuers would rappel to down to him. At this point, the rescue team member would rig Craig's harness for a short haul rescue by the helicopter off the ledge. By 3 PM, the DPS Ranger crew had successfully lifted Craig and the rescue team members off the rock.

Craig told deputies he was attempting to make it to the top of the rock after finding a preexisting rope line. During the ascent, he got stuck on a ledge and called his friend who in turn called 911 for help.

GRANITE MOUNTAIN RESCUE - This September 8, 2015, incident involved 2 hikers rescued from the north face of Granite Mountain, Prescott, Arizona. The report indicates the men, one aged 76 and the other in his 30's, started their hike around 7 am the prior day from the Williamson Valley trailhead. Their planned route was backcountry hiking, off-trail, up the mountain. By midday on the 7th, they had experienced rain and a thunderstorm. By nightfall while on their way down the mountain, they had only water, no warm clothes, shelter, flashlights, food, nor a means to make fire.

On Monday night around 9:30 PM, a 911 call was made with indications they were lost. GPS coordinates from their cell phone were obtained. A DPS Ranger helicopter, based out of Phoenix, and members of the Backcountry Unit were deployed. The helicopter was able to make visual contact with the hikers, but was not able to safely land due to the terrain and darkness. The Backcountry Unit, hiking through extreme brush and rough terrain, reached the pair at approximately 3am. The hikers were given clothing and food. A safe area for the group was found, a fire was started, and arrangements were made for a DPS Ranger helicopter from Flagstaff to fly in at daylight. The next day, September 8, the DPS Ranger crew and members of the Backcountry Unit were able to short-haul one of the hikers out of the wilderness. The second hiker and Backcountry team members were airlifted back to the trailhead at approximately 8:30am.

Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website:

www.ycsoaz.gov